The Government of India in the Ministry of Agriculture is implementing through the State Governments various programmes like, the National Food Security Mission (NFSM), the National Horticulture Mission (NHM) and Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) to increase agricultural productivity and production in the country.

**Taxes and tariffs on medicines**

2293. SHRI VIJAY JAWAHARLAL DARDA: Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that taxes and tariffs are contributing significantly towards raising the prices of life-saving medicines;

(b) if so, what steps have been taken to ensure that economically weaker segments are able to purchase life-saving medicines so that their lives are saved; and

(c) what are the details of the reduction in taxes, tariffs, etc. to keep the life-saving medicines within the reach of poor patients, during 2006, 2007 and 2008?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI SRIKANT JENA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) This Department has launched Generic Drug Campaign by opening JAN AUSHADHI stores for providing unbranded quality generic medicines at affordable prices.

(c) In 2006 Union Budget, a concessional basic duty @ 5% were provided on 10 specified Anti-AIDS; 14 specified anti-cancer and 4 specified life saving drugs including their bulk drugs. These drugs were also exempted from countervailing duty by way of excise duty exemption. In 2007 Union Budget, there was no change in duty structure of drugs. In 2008, Union Budget five specified life saving drugs including their bulk drugs and one specified anti-cancer diagnostic kit, were provided a concessional 5% basic custom duty with nil countervailing duty by way of excise duty exemption. Further one anti-AIDS drug and the bulk drugs for the manufacturer of the said drug were also fully exempted from excise duty. In same year, the central excise duty on pharmaceutical products including drugs/medicines were reduced from 16% to 8%. Thereafter, the central excise duty on drugs/medicines was further reduced from 8% to 4% with effect from 7th December, 2008.

**Pharma policy**

2294. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI: Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a decision has not been taken on the long awaited pharma policy which had been referred to GoM headed by former Food and Agriculture Minister two years back for taking a final call;

(b) if so, whether industry also prioritise more stimulus for research and development (R&D) and tax benefits for contract research and manufacturing;